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PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR MYCENAEAN STUDIES

The British Association for Mycenaean Studies held its first conference at the University of London Institute of Classical Studies on 24-25 September 1968. The meeting was organized by the Committee, consisting of Dr J. Chadwick, Dr J. B. Hainsworth and Dr J. T. Killen. The conference took the form of four sessions, at which ten papers were presented, followed by discussion. One of the principal aims was to bring together the archaeologists interested in Minoan Crete and the linguists interested in the Minoan scripts and to try to present as complete a picture as possible of the present state of our knowledge of the Minoans, especially as regards their origins and affinities. The Committee is grateful to the speakers who provided the papers and to the large number of others who attended and assisted in the discussions.

The following is the list of speakers and their papers:-

Dr P. Warren	The Origins of the Minoans
Mr G. Cadogan	Evidence for the Minoans outside Crete
Dr J. B. Hainsworth	The Pre-Greek Place Names
Dr J. Chadwick	The Nature of the Minoan Scripts
Mrs A. Morpurgo Davies	The Structure of the Minoan Language
Dr J. T. Killen	The Minoan Documents
Professor G. Huxley	The Minoans in Greek Sources
Dr W. G. Lambert	The Semitic Decipherment Theory
Miss G. R. Hart	The Hittite and Luwian Decipherment Theories
Dr F. H. Stubbings	The Collapse of the Minoan Palace Civilization

Short summaries of the papers prepared by the authors are printed below.

The pressing question for the philologist interested in the history and prehistory of Greek is: "What can we know about the language of the Minoans?" A survey of the various approaches tried in the past may help.

It is conceivable that the pre-Greek substratum to which we attribute such words as ἔλαιον, οἶνος, κυπάρισσος, λείριον, σῦκον etc. may be identified with the language of the Minoans, but there is one basic objection. We have no evidence that these and similar non-IE words form a consistent group, i.e. belong to one and the same language. It is possible that they testify to different substrata, and if so any attempt to give them clear-cut labels is bound to be unsuccessful.

A second approach may start from Linear B. The tablets contain some words of which we can guess the approximate meaning, but which we cannot compare with any IE or Greek form (see e.g. *te-pa*, *tu-na-no*). They might be technical terms taken over in the restricted ambience of Crete from the Minoans and not preserved in later Greek. Similarly it could be suggested that the presence of *e-ra-wo* (ἔλαιον), *wo-no* (οἶνος) etc. in Linear B supports the thesis of their Minoan origin. In both cases the inference is dubious and Linear B itself provides a warning note. We find in the texts a number of borrowed words of Phoenician or Anatolian origin; that we can identify them is often due to chance or to recent discoveries in the Near East. If so, it is admissible that the puzzling forms mentioned come under the heading 'commercial borrowings', rather than under the heading 'substratum' or 'Minoan'. As for the second category, which includes words common to the whole of Greek, their presence in the Mycenaean tablets gives us a terminus ante quem for their penetration into Greek, but this may have happened at any stage of the IE migrations towards Greece.

More than one attempt has been made to obtain some information about Minoan from Linear B spelling rules. It is argued that the peculiarities of Linear B are due to the fact that the script was invented for a non-Greek language. The script then might be used as evidence in reconstructing some of the features of the language itself. Thus it is attractive to suppose, e.g., that Minoan did not distinguish between voiced, voiceless and aspirated phonemes (the problem of the dentals has to be explained otherwise), or between *r* and *l*, that it had a series of labialized and palatalized phonemes and that it showed some marked preference for open syllables. There are two dangers here. First, scholars have often identified the language for which the script was invented with the language of Linear A or the language of the Minoans. For this there is no evidence at the moment. Secondly, the theory has been based on the assumption that there must be a close correspondence between language and script, but this is often not the case in ancient scripts which aim not only at expressing phonemic distinctions but also at their own internal economy. Examples of this may be quoted from a number of Near Eastern scripts. Moreover the few preserved place-names to which we can attribute a Minoan origin do not encourage us to suppose that syllables formed by consonant + vowel or by vowel only were the prevailing pattern (cf. e.g. Φαιστός, Ἀμνισός etc.).

The real information must then come from the texts. Of these only the Linear A tablets — and in particular the Hagia Triada tablets — seem at the moment to be approachable. Some observations on the structure of the language can be made even without deciphering the actual value of the signs. Through comparison of similar sign groups it may seem possible to distinguish some prefixes or suffixes or even infixes. However, in practically all cases the very assumption that these distinctions are legitimate remains uncertain, because it is impossible to prove that the sign groups in question are in any way related. In a few cases some more evidence is forthcoming. It seems justifiable, for instance, to 'extract' a suffix L 78 from HT 104 where three words end in L 78: of these two appear without the final sign elsewhere (HT 103,

HT 20). The same suffix may perhaps be recognized in Knossos (IV 1 a, b). Also, a suffix L 60 could be extracted from HT 96 a, 1 if compared with HT 35, 1. Moreover the name which is written as L 1-L 60 in HT 85 a, 2 and HT 102, 2 might be identified with L 1-L 60-L 26 written in HT 6 b, 6, HT 93 a, 1, 8; in this case we may have different spellings of the same word rather than different grammatical forms or different formations. Attempts to identify a prefix L 52 made by Goold-Pope and others do not appear very satisfactory in view of the number of doubtful readings involved, but may be on the right lines.

So far the evidence is very scanty indeed. Yet, even to take the further step of attributing Linear B values to Linear A signs provides no additional support for the thesis that Linear A is an inflected language. On the positive side, however, it does allow us to establish a definite statistical preference for the three vowels *a*, *i*, *u*, and to identify a number of alternations of the type *e/i*, *a/e*, *a/ja* and perhaps *u/wa*; at least the first, third and fourth case may remind us of parallel graphic (?) phenomena in Linear B. Though meaning and form of other lexical elements remain uncertain, it may also be possible to identify three place names: *pa-i(?) -to*, *ku-do-ni* and, more surprisingly, *su-ki-ri-te-i?-ja* or *su-ki-ri-te-se?-ja* (cf. Linear B *su-ki-ri-ta*). If we could speak with confidence of a suffix *-se-ja* or *-i-ja* this might be a decisive step forward, but here as elsewhere we are baulked by the lack of further evidence.

Dr J. T. Killen

THE MINOAN DOCUMENTS

Long before the script was deciphered, it was possible to tell from the commodity signs and numerals which they contained that the Linear B tablets were records of business transactions. It was also possible to establish the *function* of certain sign-groups on the tablets from the way in which they were used. Thus long before the sound values of the signs were established, Cowley was able to show that the sign-groups *ko-wo* and *ko-wa* on the Knossos tablets were likely to represent 'children', judging by the fact that they regularly appeared as a pair, and each with following numerals, after what was palpably the sign for 'woman'. Even to-day, much of the work that continues on interpreting the Linear B tablets is in a real sense independent of the decipherment. To the present writer at least, the best hope for further progress towards understanding the tablets appears to lie in treating the records not as isolated specimens of early Greek but as cards, as it were, in a card-index: in reconstructing the original files of records of which each tablet formed part (by determining the scribal hand and find-spot) and detecting significant relationships between tablets in that file. And often the first clue to a significant relation between two tablets in a file is provided, not by a deciphered word, but by a numeral. For example, we can tell from the Knossos Lc (cloth) tablets that seven units of wool were required to make a unit of CLOTH + TE; and when one finds consignments of wool being recorded on Od 562 (in the same hand as the Lc tablets) in amounts involving multiples of seven, the possibility at once suggests itself that the wool concerned may have been destined for manufacture into CLOTH + TE. And so, in fact, it appears to have been. In interpreting Linear B, it is always worth remembering that, for the scribe who wrote the tablet, the most important thing on it was very probably the number.

At the same time, however, what we now know of the contents of the Linear B tablets warns us of the kind of dangers one faces in attempting to establish the purpose of records, and of individual sign-groups within those records, before one has deciphered their script. For example, one of the obvious ways of trying to make sense of a document whose language one does not know is to isolate words which appear to have the same function. If two similar-looking words regularly appear in identical positions in the tablets, one is tempted to suppose that their function is also similar. But time and again the decipherment of Linear B has shown the dangers of too rigid an application of parallelism of this kind. It is true, for instance, that most Knossos CLOTH